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A RECORD CORN CROP

ANNCR:
THE UNITED STATES THIS YEAR EXPECTS TO HARVEST ITS LARGEST EVER CORN CROP AND ITS SECOND LARGEST WHEAT CROP. VOA BUSINESS EDITOR FRANK FEINBERG LOOKS AT THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE:

VOICE:

THIS YEAR'S CORN CROP NOW IS ESTIMATED AT ABOUT ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-SIX MILLION METRIC TONS (6.55 BILLION BUSHELS). AND THIS YEAR'S WHEAT HARVEST IS PROJECTED AT MORE THAN SEVENTY-SEVEN MILLION METRIC TONS (2.1 BILLION BUSHELS).

THE FIGURES ARE IMPRESSIVE, BUT THEIR REAL SIGNIFICANCE IS IN THEIR ECONOMIC IMPACT, BOTH IN THE UNITED STATES AND ABROAD. AS DON PAARLBERG, THE AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT'S CHIEF ECONOMIST POINTS OUT, THE BUMPER CROPS WILL BOTH HELP TO HOLD DOWN FOOD PRICES IN THE UNITED STATES, AND WILL ENABLE THE U.S. TO FURNISH GRAIN TO THE SOVIET UNION, WESTERN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE WHERE NEEDED.

CORN IS BY FAR THE LARGEST GRAIN CROP GROWN IN THE UNITED STATES. IT IS A POPULAR FOOD PRODUCT WITH AMERICANS, BOTH IN ITS NATURAL AND PROCESSED FORM. AND AS LIVESTOCK FEED, CORN IS THE MOST IMPORTANT GRAIN FOR PRODUCING MEAT, POULTRY AND DAIRY PRODUCTS. CORN ALSO IS IN BIG DEMAND BY OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION, AS LIVESTOCK FEED.

AS FOR WHEAT, BREAD IS THE STAFF OF LIFE JUST ABOUT EVERYWHERE. AND AS THE AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT SAYS, THERE ARE BUYERS WAITING -- BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD -- FOR THE ANTICIPATED

BIG CROP. THE SOVIET WHEAT CROP, ACCORDING TO AVAILABLE INFORMATION, WILL BE UP FROM EARLIER ESTIMATES. THERE WERE GOOD RAINS IN THE SOVIET UNION THIS PAST SPRING -- BUT THAT COUNTRY STILL IS EXPECTED TO NEED SUBSTANTIAL GRAIN IMPORTS. MOSCOW, TO DATE, HAS PURCHASED MORE THAN FOUR-MILLION METRIC TONS OF AMERICAN SOYBEANS AND GRAINS IN THIS FIRST YEAR OF THE SOVIET-U.S. LONG-TERM GRAIN SALES AGREEMENT. AND MISTER PAARLBERG FORECASTS THAT BEFORE YEAR'S END THE SOVIET UNION WILL HAVE CONTRACTED FOR A MINIMUM OF SIX-MILLION METRIC TONS OF GRAIN AND POSSIBLY AS MUCH AS EIGHT-MILLION METRIC TONS.

THE SOVIET NEED FOR AMERICAN SOYBEANS AND GRAIN IS DICTATED IN CONSIDERABLE MEASURE BY AN EFFORT TO RAISE THE PROTEIN INTAKE LEVEL OF THE POPULATION. THE PER-CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF MEAT IN THE SOVIET UNION LAST YEAR IS ESTIMATED AT FIFTY-EIGHT KILOGRAMS (127 POUNDS). SOVIET NUTRITIONISTS SAY THE NORM OUGHT TO BE MORE LIKE EIGHTY-TWO KILOGRAMS A YEAR PER PERSON (ABOUT 180 POUNDS). SO IMPORTED BEANS AND GRAINS ARE NEEDED TO EXPAND POULTRY FLOCKS AND ANIMAL HERDS.

JS/PBM